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No.259

# AccuClaim

## Meal Counts Count!



United States Department of Agriculture  
Food and Nutrition Service • FNS-259

# What is AccuClaim?

AccuClaim is the name for changes in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) regulations aimed at making sure schools submit accurate claims for the meals they

serve. The purpose is to see that the schools get the reimbursement that's due to them--and that the Government pays only for meals actually served.

School lunch plays a key role in each child's school day. By helping the program run the way it should, AccuClaim ensures that the program continues to provide nutritional benefits to the Nation's children.

Schools and School Food Authorities across the Nation use different meal service systems and procedures, from the traditional roster method to state-of-the-art computer technology. Nevertheless, every





system must fulfill certain requirements to make it accurate and accountable.

These 11 steps will result in a meal count system that keeps accurate track of meals and ensures that each school will submit an accurate claim and be reimbursed properly for the meals it serves:

### **1. Select a system**

Evaluate your school's needs and program objectives, look at the meal count systems available, and choose the one that seems likely to work best in your situation.

### **2. Write the instructions**

There should be detailed, written instructions for every person and every job within the meal count system.

### **3. Train the workers**

In addition to having written instructions, every worker should be trained in his or her duties and responsibilities in the system.





#### **4. Document eligibility**

Each school must keep an up-to-date list of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals. The list must be based on accurately approved applications.

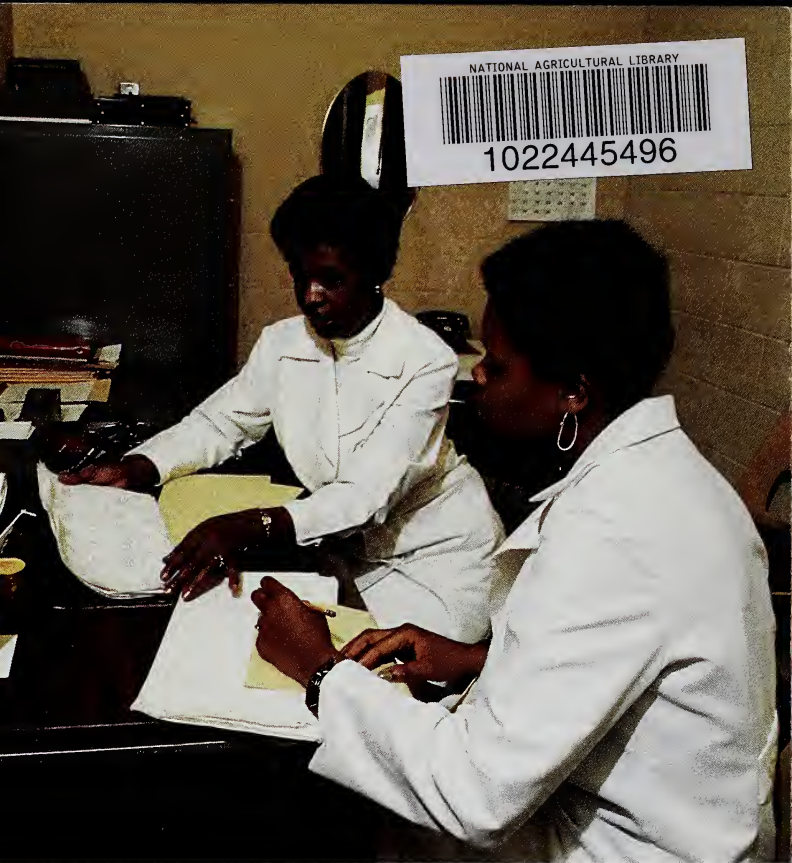
#### **5. Choose a medium of exchange**

Each school or district decides on its own medium of exchange; that is, the ticket, token, ID, name, number, or whatever the student gives in exchange for the meal. In most cases, it will identify whether the student is eligible for free or reduced-price meals, but must do so in a way that is not obvious to other students.









### **6. Be sure meals are reimbursable**

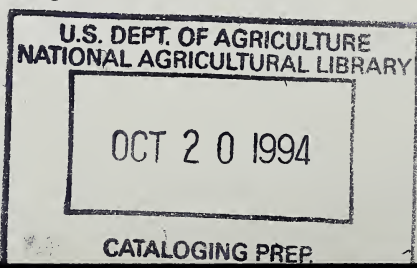
In order for a school to be reimbursed for a child's meal, the meal must meet meal pattern requirements. That means it must include the five food items in appropriate quantities. For "offer versus serve," the meal must include at least three food items.

### **7. Take counts at "point of service"**

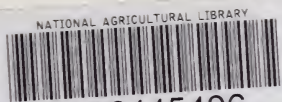
Each school must take meal counts at that point in the food service line where it can be determined that each eligible child has been served a reimbursable meal. In most cases, this "point of service" will be at the end of the service line.

### **8. Manage cash carefully**

Each school must have procedures to safeguard and account for cash and/or the medium of exchange.







### **9. Make daily reports**

Careful records must be kept by each school of the meals served and cash collected. Daily reports are forwarded to the School Food Authority for preparation of the monthly claim for reimbursement.

### **10. Make careful edit checks**

There must be a system for each school and School Food Authority to verify the accuracy of their meal counts and reports, and to identify potential problems in the meal count system.

### **11. Monitor the system**

Each School Food Authority must conduct internal reviews to ensure that claims for reimbursement are accurate.

#### **For further information and guidance, see the following:**

- NSLP regulations - 7 CFR Part 210
- AccuClaim handbook
- AccuClaim: "Meal Counts Count" video
- State/FNS guidance publications on AccuClaim

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